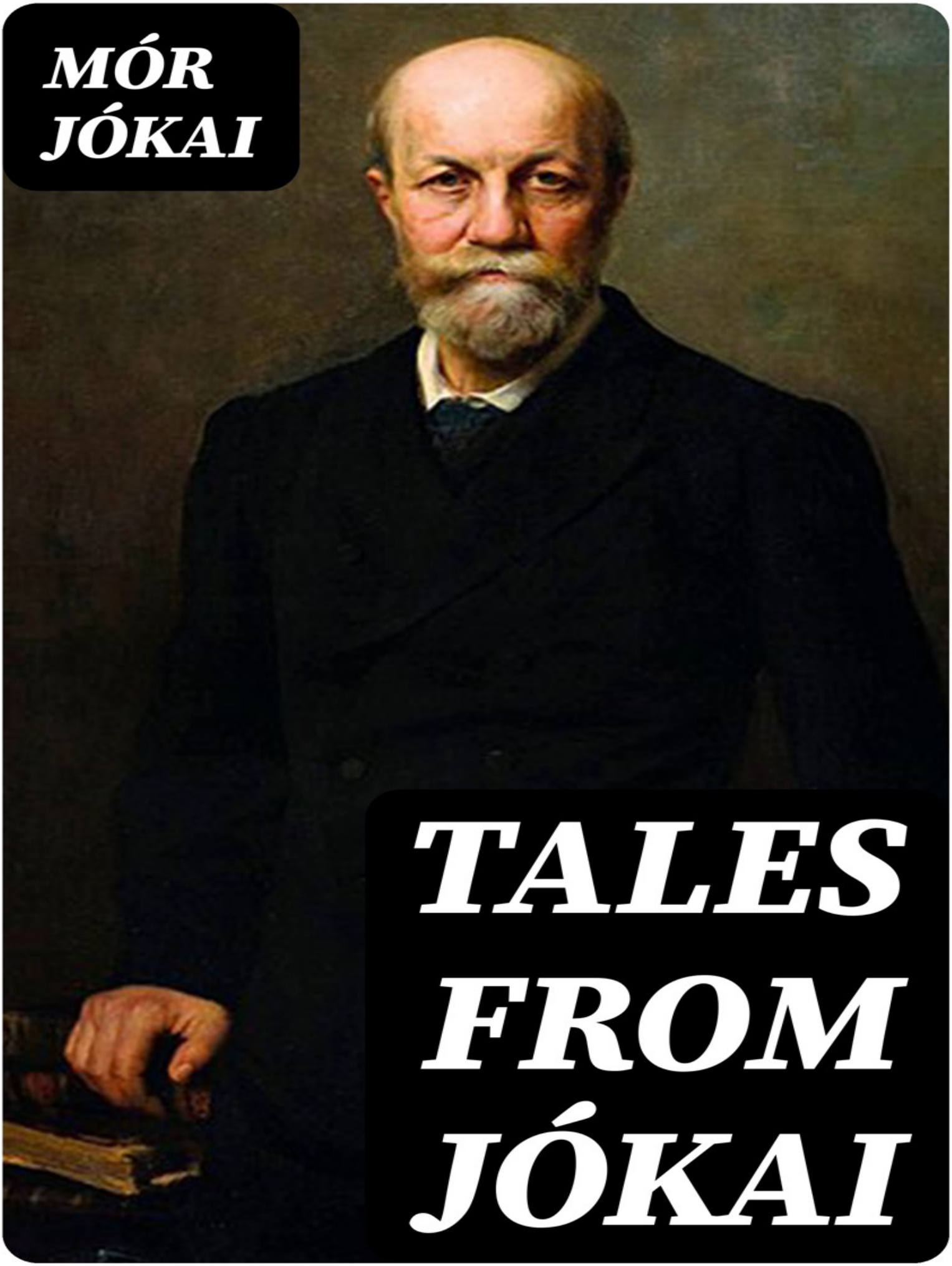
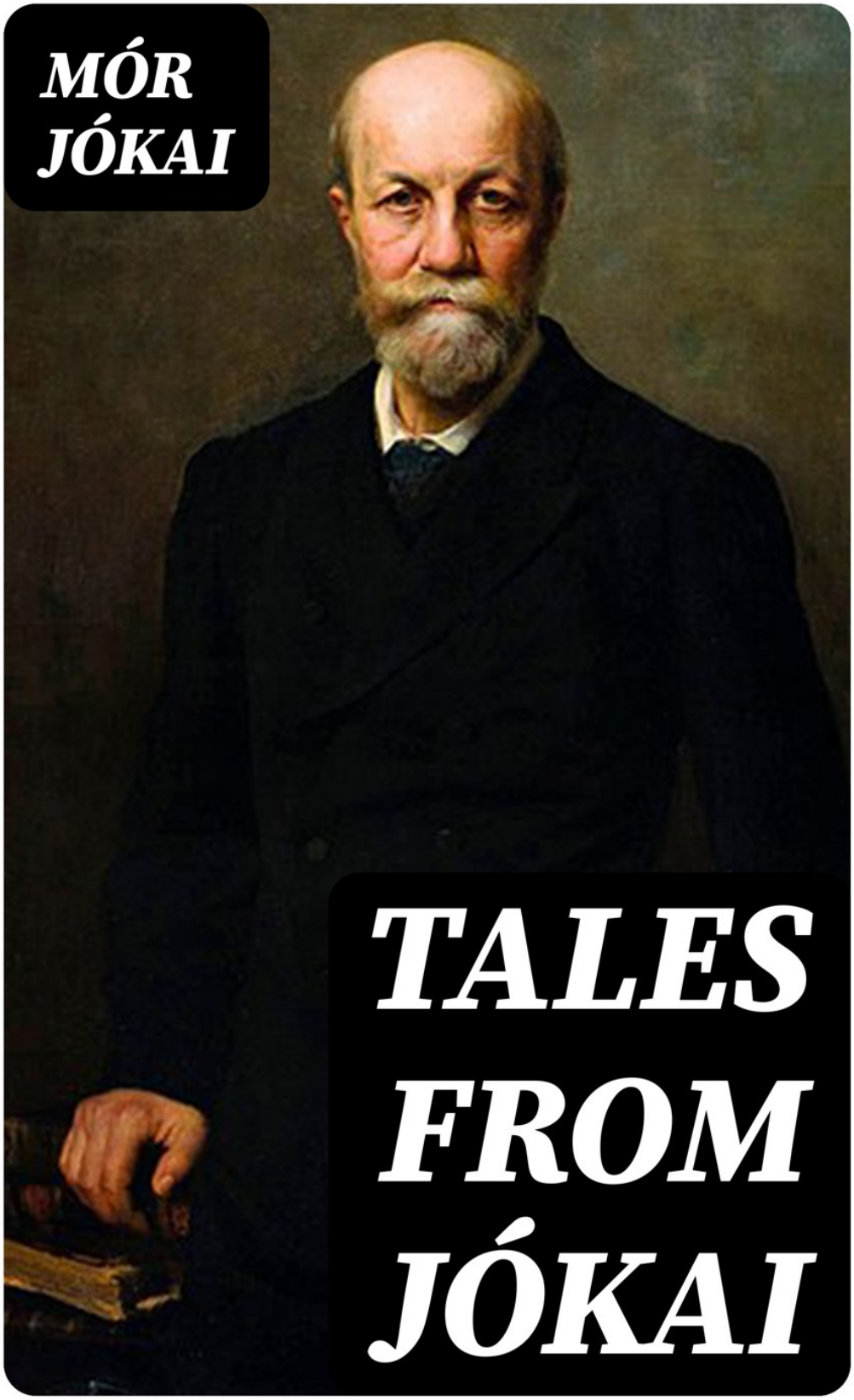
MÓR JÓKAI



TALES FROM JÓKAI


MÓR
JÓKAI
TALES
FROM
JÓKAI

Mór Jókai

Tales From Jókai

EAN 8596547129332

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Table of Contents

Besides his romances, Jókai has, from time to time, published volumes of shorter stories which, in the opinion of many good Magyar critics, contain some of his most notable work. The present selection will enable English readers to judge of the merits of these stories for the first time. It does not profess to be the best selection which might be made. Many excellent tales could not be included within its narrow limits; others again, equally good, suit Hungarian rather than British taste. But, anyhow, it claims to be fairly representative, and to give a taste of the many widely differing qualities of the most Protean of romancers. Numbers I. and IX., for instance, are models of what historical tales should be, and could only have been written by an author gifted with the historical imagination; Numbers II. and V. are light comic sketches; Number VIII. is a ghost story which Dickens might have written; Numbers III. and IV. are narratives of a grimmer order, with touches of horror not unworthy of the author of "Pretty Michal;" Number VI. is a faithful and picturesque narrative of social life in old Poland —evidently studied with care; while in Number VII. Jókai gives full rein to his wondrous imagination, and his Pegasus actually carries the reader right away to the capital of the lost island of Atlantis!

Finally, a bibliographical note. The earliest in date of these stories is Number VII., which was originally published, in 1856, under the title of "Oceánia." Next in chronological sequence come Numbers I.-IV., which are to be found in the

collection "Jókai Mór Dekameronja," published in 1858. Number VIII. first appeared in the collection "A Magyar világból," 1879; Number V. is taken from "Humoristicus papirszeletek," 1880; Number IX. from "Kis Dekameron," 1890; and Number VI. is the first story in the volume entitled, "Kétszer Kettö-negy," 1893.

R. NISBET BAIN.

May, 1904.

BIOGRAPHY OF JÓKAI

Table of Contents

JÓKAI MÓR

At the general meeting of the Hungarian Academy on October 17, 1843, the secretary reported that the 100-florin prize for the best drama of the year had been awarded to Károly Obernik's *Föur és pór* (Squire and Boor), but that another drama, entitled *Zsido fiú* (The Jew Boy), had been honourably mentioned, and, indeed, in the opinion of one of the judges, Joseph Bajza, was scarcely inferior to the prize-play itself. The author of the latter piece was a youth of eighteen, Maurus Jókai, a law student at Kecskemet, whose literary essays had already begun to attract some notice in the local papers. That name is now one of the most illustrious in Hungary, and one of the best known in Europe.

Maurus Jókai was born at Rév-Komárom on February 18, 1825. His father, Joseph, a scion of the Ásva branch of the old Calvinist Jókay family, was a lawyer by profession, but a lawyer who had seen something of the world, and loved art

and letters. His mother came of the noble Pulays. She was venerated by her son, and is the prototype of the downright, masterful housewives, with warm hearts, capable heads, and truant sons, who so frequently figure in his pages. Maurus was their third and youngest child and the pet of the whole family. He seems to have been a super-sensitive, very affectionate lad, always fonder of books than of games, but liking best of all to listen to the innumerable tales his father had to tell of the Napoleonic wars, in which he himself had borne a humble part, or of the still more marvellous exploits and legends of the old Magyar heroes. It was doubtless from his father that Maurus inherited much of his literary and artistic talents.

At a very early age little Maurus was remarkable for an extraordinarily vivid imagination, but this quality, which, at a later day, was to bring him both fame and fortune, made his childhood wretched. Naturally timid, his nervous fancy was perpetually tormenting him. He had a morbid fear of being buried alive; old, long-bearded Jews and stray dogs inspired him with dread; his first visit to a day-school, at the age of four, was a terrifying adventure, though his father went with him. Even now, however, the child's precocity was prodigious. To him study was no toil, but a passion. His masters could not teach him quickly enough.

In his twelfth year occurred the first calamity of his life. He was summoned from his studies to the death-bed of his beloved father, a catastrophe which he took so much to heart that he fell seriously ill, and for a time his own life was despaired of. He owed his recovery entirely to "my good and blessed sister Esther," as he ever afterwards called her, who

nursed him through his illness with a rare and skilful devotion. He recovered but slowly, and for the next five years was haunted by a black melancholy which he endeavoured to combat by the most intense application to study. At the Comorn Gymnasium, whither he was first sent, he had the good fortune to have for his tutor Francis Váły, subsequently his brother-in-law, a man of rigid puritan principles, profound learning, and many-sided accomplishments, in every way an excellent teacher, who instructed him in French, English, and Italian, and prepared him for college. Váły's influence was decidedly bracing, and his pupil rewarded his conscientious care with a lifelong gratitude. It was Váły, too, who first taught Jókai the useful virtue of early rising. Summer and winter he was obliged to be in his tutor's study at five o'clock every morning. The habit so acquired was never abandoned, and is the simplest explanation of Jókai's extraordinary productivity. By far the greater part of his three hundred volumes has been written before breakfast.

From the Gymnasium of Comorn Jókai proceeded, in 1841, to the Calvinist college at Pápá. It was here that he fell in with a number of talented young men of his own age, including that brilliant meteoric genius Alexander Petöfi, who was presently to reveal himself as one of the greatest lyric poets of the century. The young men founded a mutual improvement society, whose members met regularly to criticise each other's compositions, and Jókai was also one of the principal contributors to the college magazine. Yet curiously enough he displayed at this time so much skill as a painter, sculptor, and carver in ivory that many seriously

thought he would owe the future fame which every one already predicted for him rather to his brush and chisel than to his pen.

In 1843, his mother sent him to Kecskemet to study jurisprudence, and in the fine, bracing air of the Alföld, or great Hungarian plain, amidst miles of orchards and vineyards, the delicate young student recovered something like normal health. It was here, too, that he was first brought into contact with the true Magyar folk-life and folk-humour, and as he himself expressed it, "became a man and a Hungarian writer." Forty-nine years later he was to record his impressions of the place in the exquisite tale "A sarga rózsa" (The Yellow Rose), certainly one of the finest of his later works. It was at Kecskemet, too, as already mentioned, that he now wrote his first play, *The Jew Boy*. At the same time he won a considerable local reputation as a portrait-painter.

Yielding to the wishes of his friends, Jókai now resolved to follow his father's profession, and for three years continued to study the law with his usual assiduity at Comorn and Pest. In 1844 he obtained his articles, and won his first action. It had needed no small heroism in an ambitious youth of nineteen to submit to the drudgery of the law after such a brilliant literary *début* as the honourable mention of his first play by the Hungarian Academy in a prize competition (though his admirers certainly never will begrudge the time thus spent in a lawyer's office, where he picked up some of his best comical characters, mainly of the Swiveller type); but, yielding now to natural bias, Jókai made up his mind to go to the capital, and try his luck at

literature. Accordingly, in 1845, the youth (he was barely twenty), undismayed by many previous terrifying examples of misery and ruin, cited *in terrorem* by his apprehensive kinsmen, flitted to Pest with a manuscript romance in his pocket. His friend Petöfi, who had settled there before him, and was becoming famous, received him with open arms, and introduced him to the young army of *literati* whom he had gathered round him at the Café Pillwax, as "a true Frenchman." In those days such a description was the highest conceivable praise. The face of every liberty-loving nation was then turned towards France, and thence the dawn of a new era was confidently anticipated. The young Magyars read nothing but French books. Lamartine's "History of the Girondists" and Tocquevelle's "Democracy" were their Bibles. Petöfi worshipped Beranger, whom he was speedily to excel, while Jókai had found his ideal in Victor Hugo. "This school might easily have become dangerous to us," says Jókai, "had not its influence, fortunately, coincided with the opening up of a new and hitherto unexplored field—the popular romance. Hitherto it had been the endeavour of Magyar writers to write in a style distinct from the language of ordinary life. Our group, on the other hand, started with the idea that it was just the very expressions, constructions, and modes of thought employed in everyday life that Hungarian writers ought to take as the fundamental principle of their writing, nay, that they should even develop ideally beautiful poetry itself from the life of the common people. ... My own ambition," he adds, "was to explore those regions where the hoof of Pegasus had hitherto left no

trace." And in this he certainly succeeded when he wrote his first considerable romance "Hétköznapok."

The novel had been successfully cultivated in Hungary long before Jókai appeared upon the scene. As early as 1794, Joseph Kármán had written "Fanni hagyományai" (Fanny's Legacies), obviously suggested by "Pamela," and still one of the best purely analytical romances in the language. A generation later, two noblemen, Baron Joseph Eötvös and Baron Michael Jósika, Jókai's elder contemporaries, respectively founded the didactic novel with a purpose and the historical romance. Eötvös, one of the most liberal and enlightened spirits of his age, fought, almost single-handed, against the abuses of feudalism in his great "A falu jegyzöje" (The Village Notary), while Jósika, an intelligent disciple of Walter Scott, enriched the national literature with a whole series of original historical romances which gave to Hungarian prose a new elevation and a distinction. But "Hétköznapok" was something quite new—so much so, indeed, that Jókai himself was doubtful about it, and determined that it should stand or fall by the verdict of the academician Ignatius Nagy, one of the most productive and ingenious writers of his day, whose influence was then at its height, and who was regarded as an oracle by literary "young Hungary." Jókai, who had never seen the great man before, approached him with considerable trepidation, which was not diminished by the very peculiar appearance of this Aristarchus. "He had," Jókai tells us, "a most embarrassing face covered with dark-red spots right up to his astonishingly lofty forehead, whose shiny baldness was half cut in two, as it were, by a bright black peruke. He had also

an inconceivably big red nose, at which, however, you had no time to be amazed, so instantly were you spell-bound by a couple of squinting eyes—one of which glared as fixedly at you as if it was made wholly of stone. His voice, on the other hand, was as the voice of a little child. And within this repulsive frame dwelt the noblest of souls, in this crippled body the most energetic of characters. From no other strange face did I ever get a kinder glance than I got from those stiff, fishy eyes, and that rich voice announced to me my first great piece of good luck. Upon his recommendation, the publisher Hartleben agreed to publish my first romance, and gave me 360 silver florins for it—in those days an immense fortune to me. I had no further need now to go scribbling all day long in a lawyer's office at six florins a month."

"Hétköznapok" was published, in two volumes, in 1846. The book caused a profound sensation. Its very extravagance suited the taste of an age steeped in Eugene Sueism, and Petöfi, in introducing Jókai to Professor Roye as "a writer who writes French romances in Magyar," hit off both the book and its author to a nicety. It was just the brilliant, exuberant, fanciful sort of thing that a clever youth with a boundless imagination, and no knowledge whatever of the world, would be likely to produce. Still, even the writers who pointed out its crudities and morbidities, praised its striking originality and charm of style, and though it gave but a faint indication of the real genius of the author it brought him into notice, and editors began to look kindly upon him. Thus Frankenburg, the editor of the literary review *Életképek*, who had just parted with his dramatic

critic for being a little too unmerciful to the artistes, was induced to take on Jókai in his place. By way of honorarium, he offered the young aspirant a free seat at the theatre and ten florins a month. But Jókai's year of office came to an end the very first week. To make up for his predecessor's want of gallantry, and obeying the dictates of his youthful enthusiasm, he lauded every lady *artiste* to the skies. "I can honestly say," Jókai tells us, with evident enjoyment of the laugh against himself, "that I meant every word of it. It was then that I saw a ballet for the first time in my life, and it was my solemn conviction that I was bound by a debt of gratitude to say a good word for the excellent damsel who exhibited her natural charms to the public eye with such magnanimous frankness. And a pretty lecture Frankenburg read me for it, too. 'Delightful Sylphid, indeed!—a clumsy stork, I should say!' Still, *that* might have passed. But it was my magnifying of Lilla Szilágyi, who took the part of Smike in *The Beggars of London*, which did the business for me. I called her 'a lovely sapling!' and promised her a brilliant future in her dramatic career. 'Leave her alone—she has no reputation at all,' said the editor. 'Then she'll get one!' said I. 'But you'll never get to be a critic,' said he. And so, for Lilla Szilágyi's sake, I laid down my *rôle* of critic; and yet I was right, after all, for she really *did* become a great artiste. I felt this snub very much at the time, but now I bless my fate that things fell out as they did. Fancy if *now* my sole title to fame rested upon my reputation as a dramatic critic!—terrible thought!"

A few days afterwards a new career suddenly opened out before Jókai. Paul Királyi, the editor of the *Jelenkor*, invited

Jókai to join his paper as a correspondent at a salary of thirty-five florins a month. Of course he jumped at it; a newspaper contributor in Hungary was then a personage of some importance. About the same time he passed his first legal examination, and became a certificated lawyer. His diploma, if not *præclarus*, was, at any rate, *laudabilis*. The oral *rigorosum* he passed through brilliantly, but, oddly enough, his *Hungarian style* was not considered satisfactory. The publication of his diploma was a sufficiently dignified excuse for a visit to his native place. He was well received in the bosom of his family; the whole clan Jókai came together for dinner at his mother's, and for supper at the house of his brother-in-law, Francis Váły. The two Calvinist ministers of the place were also invited, and one of them toasted him as "the ward of two guardians, and guardian of Two Wards," the first allusion being to their spiritual guardianship, and the second to his new drama, *The Two Wards*. "It was the first toast that ever made me blush," says Jókai. The next day was fixed for the meeting of the County Board, and at the end of the proceedings his diploma was promulgated. On the same day his mother gave him his father's silver-mounted sword and the cornelian signet-ring with the old family crest upon it, which the elder Jókai had been wont to wear. "Democrat as I am," says Jókai, "I frankly confess that to me there was a soul-steeling thought in the reflection that with this sword my worthy ancestors, much better men than I, had defended their nation and constitution of yore, and that this signet-ring had put the seal upon their covenanted rights for all time."

On returning to Pest, he found awaiting him a letter from Petöfi, informing him that he had just married Julia Szendrey, and begging Jókai to seek out a convenient lodging where they and he could live together. That a newly married husband should invite his faithful bachelor comrade to live with him under the same roof was, as Jókai well remarks, a fact belonging to the realm of fairy-tale. Jókai immediately hunted up a nice first-floor apartment in Tobacco Street, consisting of three rooms and their appurtenances, the first room being for the Petöfis, the second for himself, while the intermediate one was to be a common dining-room, each with a separate entrance. The young couple came in during the autumn; they kept one maid, and Jókai had an old man-servant to wait upon him. The furniture was primitive. Mrs. Petöfi, who had left the mansion of her wealthy and eminent father without either dowry or blessing—the family utterly opposing the match, and visiting the enamoured young lady with the full weight of their heavy displeasure—had not so much as a fashionable hat to put on, and sewed together a sort of head-dress of her own invention, which, when finished, she had not the courage to wear. They had nothing, and yet were perfectly happy, and so was Jókai. Their dinners were sent in from a tavern, the Golden Eagle, close at hand, and their chief amusement was to learn English and laugh at each other's blunders.

A quarrel with the naturally irritating and overbearing Petöfi put an end to this symposium, and, doubtless to every one's relief, Jókai started a bachelor establishment of his own, consisting of a couple of rooms, which he furnished

himself. Properly speaking, it only became a bachelor's establishment when he entered it. Previously thereto it had been occupied by a little old woman, popularly known as Mámi, who kept a well-known registry office for servants, and the consequence was that a whole mob of cooks, parlour-maids, and nursery-maids invaded Jókai's premises at all hours, under the persuasion that he could provide them with places. This constant flow of petticoats to his door not only disturbed his work terribly, but was sufficient to have brought a less studious and conscientious man into disrepute. It was at this time that Jókai became the responsible editor of the *Életképek* during the temporary absence of Frankenburg, and so began his political career. The *Életképek* was one of the most widely read journals of those days. Under Frankenburg's able editorship it had become the leading radical print, and it was no small glory for Jókai that, despite his youth, he should have been thought worthy of directing it. It numbered among its contributors some of the most brilliant names in the Hungarian Literature, from Vörösmarty to Arany. His literary colleagues assembled regularly at Jókai's lodgings to discuss current political events, and more than one idea of reform was hatched under the wing of the *Életképek*. It was in this occupation that the stormy, headlong month of March, 1848, found our hero. It was to tear him away from his moorings and cast him upon a veritable sea of troubles; but it was also to arouse and develop his capabilities in the school of life and action.

On February 23, 1848, a revolution broke out at Paris, and in a couple of days Louis Philip was a dethroned exile.

Such a facile victory of liberal principles encouraged other liberty-loving nations to follow the example of the mother of constitutions, and the Hungarians were among the first to rise. In the Diet, Louis Kossuth eloquently demanded equality before the law, a popular representative parliament, and an independent, responsible ministry; but the new wine of nineteenth-century liberalism speedily burst the old bottles of obsolete, if picturesque, constitutional forms, and the direction of the movement, which became more and more impetuous every moment, slipped from the control of the cautious diplomatists and politicians at Vienna into the hands of the enthusiastic journalists and demagogues of Budapest. Amongst these, young Jókai, from the first, took a leading part. Early in the morning of March 15, he and his friends, Petöfi, Vasváry, and Bulyovszky, met in Jókai's room, by lamplight, and his comrades entrusted him with the framing of a manifesto, based upon the famous *Twelve Points*, or Articles of Pest, drawn up the day before by Joseph Irinyi, embodying the wishes of the Hungarian nation. This done, they rushed out into the public squares and harangued the mob, which had assembled in thousands. But speech-making was not sufficient; they wanted to *do* something, and the first thing to be done was, obviously, to give practical application to the doctrine of a free press. So they determined to print forthwith the Twelve Articles, the Manifesto, and Petöfi's incendiary song, "Talpra Magyar," without the consent of the censor. What followed must be told in Jókai's own words:—

"The printing-press of Landerer and Heckenast was honoured with this compulsory distinction. The printers,

naturally, were not justified in printing anything without the permission of the authorities, so we turned up our sleeves and worked away at the hand-presses ourselves. The name of the typewriter who set up the first word of freedom was *Potemkin*! While Irinyi and other young authors were working away at the press, it was my duty to harangue the mob which thronged the whole length of Hatváni Street. I had no idea how to set about it, but it came of its own accord. My worthy and loyal contemporary, Paul Szontagh, occasionally quotes to me, even now, some of the heaven-storming phrases which he heard me utter on that occasion, *e.g.* '... No, fellow-citizens! he is no true hero who can only *die* for his country; he who can *slay* for his country, he is the true hero!' That was the sort of oratory I used to practise in those days. Meanwhile the rain was beginning to fall, and rain is the most reactionary opponent of every revolution. But my people were not to be dispersed by the rain, and all at once the whole street was filled with expanded umbrellas. I was outraged at the sight. 'What, gentlemen!' I thundered, from the corner of the street, 'if you stick up your umbrellas now against mere rain-drops, what will you stick up against the bullets which will presently begin to fall?' It was only then that I noticed that there were not only gentlemen around me, but ladies also. I exhorted the ladies to go home. Here they would get dripping wet, I said, and some other accident might befall them. 'We are no worse off here than you are,' was the reply. They were determined to wait till the printed broad-sides were ready. Not very long afterwards, Irinyi appeared at the window of the printing-office, for to get out of the door was a sheer impossibility.

He held in his hands the first printed sheets from the free press. Ah, that scene, when the very first few sheets were distributed from hand to hand! ... And now a young county official was seen forcing his way through the dense crowd right to the very door of the printing-office, and from thence he addressed me. The Vice-Lieutenant of the county, Paul Nyáry, sent word that I was to go to him at the town hall. 'Why should *I* go?' I cried, from my point of vantage. 'I'll be shot if I do! If the Vice-Lieutenant of the county wants to speaks to me, let *him* come *here*! We are "the mountain" now.' And Mohammed really *did* come to 'the mountain,' and, ... what is more, he came to approve of what we had done hitherto, and then to go along with us to the town hall to ratify the articles of the liberal programme. ... The town hall was crammed to suffocation. Those who were called upon to speak, stood upon the green table, and remained there afterwards, so that at last the whole magistracy of the county, and I and all my colleagues, were standing on the table. The Burgomaster announced from the balcony of the town hall that the town of Pest had adopted the Twelve Articles, and with that the avalanche carried the whole of the burgesses along with it. ... In the evening the town was illuminated, and a free performance was given at the theatre, *Bánk Bán*, Katona's celebrated historical drama, being the piece selected. But the mob, which, by this time, was in a state of ecstasy, had no longer the patience to listen to the sublime declamations of the Ban Peter. It called for 'Talpra Magyar!' (Up, up, Magyars!), the Hungarian Marseillaise. What was to be done? The brilliant court of King Andrew II., with the Queen and *Bánk Bán* to boot, had

to form a group round Gabriel Egressy, who, in a simple *attila*, and with a sword by his side, stood in the middle of the stage and declaimed, with magnificent emphasis, Petöfi's inspiring poem. ... Then the band struck up the Rákóczy march, so long prohibited in Hungary because of its supposed revolutionary tendency. This naturally increased the excitement instead of extinguishing it. ... Then a voice from the gallery suddenly cried, 'Long live Tancsis!'—Tancsis, by the way, was a political prisoner who had been released that very morning from the citadel of Buda by the mob—and with that the whole populace suddenly roared with one voice, 'Tancsis! Tancsis!' A frightful tumult arose. Tancsis was not at hand. He lived somewhere in a distant suburb. But even had he been near, it would have been a cruel thing to have dragged on to the stage a poor, worn-out invalid, that he might merely make his bow to the public. But what was to be done? 'Well, my sons,' said Nyáry, with whom I was standing in the same box, 'you have awakened this great monster; now see if you can put him to sleep again!' All my young friends, one after the other, attempted to address the people. ... The curtain was let down, but then the tumult grew more than ever, the gallery stamped like mad; it was a perfect pandemonium. Then an idea occurred to me. I could get on to the stage from Nyáry's box. I rushed on through the side wings. A pretty figure I cut, I must say. I was splashed up to the knees with mud, from scouring the streets all day. I wore huge goloshes; my battered cylinder, surmounted by a gigantic red feather, was drenched with rain, so that I could easily have thrust it under my arm and made a crush hat of it. I looked around me and perceived

Egressy. I told him to draw up the curtain; I would harangue the people from the stage. Rozsa Laborfalvi, who played the part of 'Queen Gertrude,' came towards me. She smiled upon me with truly majestic grace, greeted me, and pressed my hand. She was wearing the Magyar tricolour cockade—red, white, and green—on her bosom, and she took it off and pinned it on my breast. Then the curtain was raised. When the mob beheld my muddy, saturated figure, it began to shout afresh, and the uproar gradually became a call for every one to hear me. When at last I was able to speak, I delivered myself of this masterly piece of oratory: 'Brother citizens! Our friend Tancsis is not here, he is at home in the bosom of his family. Allow the poor blind man to taste the joy of seeing his family once more.' It was only then that I became conscious of the nonsense I was talking. How could a *blind* man *see* his family? If the mob began to laugh I was done for! It was the tricoloured ribbon which saved me. 'Regard this tricoloured cockade on my breast!' I cried. 'Let it be the badge of this glorious day! Let every man who is freedom's warrior wear it! It will distinguish us from the hirelings of slavery. These three colours represent the three sacred words, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! Let every one in whom Magyar blood and a free spirit burns wear them on his breast.' And so the thing was done. The tricoloured cockade preserved order. Whoever wished to pin on the tricoloured cockade had to hurry home first. Ten minutes later the theatre was empty, and the next day the tricoloured cockade was to be seen on every breast. ... In the intoxication of my triumph I hastened after Rozsa Laborfalvi as soon as this scene was over and pressed her

hand. And with that pressure our engagement began. ... And the honeymoon was in keeping with the engagement. The roar of cannon and the clash of arms was the music that played at *my* wedding."

The lady whose heart and hand Jókai won under such stimulating circumstances was in every way worthy of him. Born at Miskolcz in 1817, Judith Laborfalvi-Benké, to give her her full family name, was thus eight years her husband's senior. Her father, Joseph Benké, a retired actor, and subsequently a teacher at the Roman Catholic girls' school at Miskolcz, permitted her, in her sixteenth year, to try her fortune on the stage, at Budapest. But the first attempt was a decided failure, and she returned home, apparently disillusioned. A second attempt proved much more successful. Her fine figure, handsome face, and sweet voice now made a great impression, and the experienced stage-manager, Egressy, recognizing her great capabilities, encouraged her to proceed. By 1837 she had superseded Madame Kantor, hitherto the chief heroine of the Magyar stage, and henceforth, till her retirement from the stage in 1859, was accounted one of the leading Hungarian actresses. Her best *rôles* were "Volumnia," "Lady Macbeth," "Adrienne Lecouvreur," "Mary Stuart" in Schiller's play of that name, and "Queen Gertrude" in *Bánk Bán*. She had already reached the height of her fame when she gave her hand to young Jókai, and it was her courage and devotion which sustained him during the dark years of trial and depression upon which he was now about to enter.

But at first there was no thought of calamity. Jókai flung himself heart and soul into the revolutionary movement. He

converted the literary *Életképek* into a political organ of the most uncompromising character, which he edited along with Petöfi; rejected the aristocratic terminal "y" of his name for the more democratic "i,"[1] and adopted for his journal the motto: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Yet Jókai was no friend of unnecessary violence; and when his co-editor, Petöfi, during Jókai's absence for a few days on his honeymoon (he married Rozsa Laborfalvi on August 27, 1848), inserted, contrary to his solemn promise, an abusive tirade against the poet Vörösmarty, Jókai severely blamed his friend's want of straightforwardness in an editorial in *Életképek*. Petöfi instantly and most virulently attacked Jókai in the columns of the same paper; accused him of ingratitude, declined to be lectured, threw up his co-editorship, and broke off all intercourse with him. Some coolness had previously arisen between the two friends owing to Petöfi's taking it upon himself to disapprove of Jókai's marriage, and communicating his views on the subject to Jókai's mother, who had disapproved of it all along. Jókai naturally resented both the criticism and the interference, and the rupture was unfortunately final, as Petöfi perished mysteriously at the Battle of Segesvár, twelve months later, before there had been any reconciliation. For now the Hungarian revolution tore every true Magyar along with it, and wonderful, incredible things were the order of the day. On September 24, 1848, Kossuth received the permission of the Hungarian Parliament to organize a rising of the population in the *Alföld*, or great Hungarian plain, and young Jókai was sent down thither as one of his chief agents; but, as if to illustrate that singular blend of common sense and

exaltation which has always characterized the Magyar in politics, the ardent author of "Hétköznapok" was accompanied by a sort of bodyguard of soberer youths, who were to cut him short without ceremony whenever his eloquence carried him too far. It was on this occasion that Jókai enlisted the services of the famous robber-chief, Alexander Rózsa,[2] for the national cause, and obtained his pardon from the Government. On the outbreak of the Vienna Revolution at the beginning of October, Kossuth sent Jókai and Csernátonai to promise the Viennese assistance, but the movement was crushed before any such assistance could be rendered. In the beginning of December, Jókai accepted the invitation of the publishers, Landerer and Heckenast, to edit the leading Pest newspaper, *Pesti Hirlap*, in place of Csengery, who had become a member of the Government. He announced, as the substance of his programme, the bringing about of "the unity and independence of the Hungarian State." After subjugating Vienna, the Austrian army advanced against Pest. On December 30 the inhabitants threw up earthworks at the foot of the Gilbert hill, working night and day without distinction of age or sex, Jókai and his wife amongst them. After the battle of Móor, January 1, 1849, when the Imperialists defeated Perczel and his Honvéds, the Jókais followed the Hungarian Government to Debreczen. Here also Jókai supported himself by journalism, and on February 22 started the *Esti Lapok* as the organ of the Constitutional Liberals as opposed to the *Marczius Tizenötödike*, the organ of the extreme Radicals. Yet Jókai himself was not infrequently carried away by his patriotism, and actually

proclaimed the republic in his newspaper two days before the Diet unanimously dethroned the Hapsburgs (April 14, 1849). When the Honvéds recaptured the fortress of Buda, the Government and the Diet returned to Pest, and Jókai, as editor of both the *Esti Lapok* and the *Pesti Hirlap*, powerfully contributed to encourage the nation in its struggle for independence. In a month's time, however, the Hungarian Government, now threatened by a combination of the Russians and Austrians, were obliged to take refuge, first at Szegedin, and finally at Arad, Jókai accompanying them to both places. He has described this portion of his life in a few eloquent sentences. "Out into the desolate world we went, in the depths of a Siberian winter, with everything crackling with cold, forcing our way along through the snowy desert of the *Alföld*, with the retreating Honvéd army, passing the night in an inhospitable hut, where the closed door had frozen to the ground by the morning, and the roll of drums and the blare of trumpets aroused us to toil on still further. ... My wife went everywhere with me. She quitted a comfortable home, sacrificed a fortune, a brilliant career, to endure hunger, cold, and hardship with me. And I never heard her utter one word of complaint. When I was downhearted she comforted me. And, when all *my* hopes were stifled, she shared *her* hopes with me. And she worked like the wife of a Siberian convict. She did not *play the part* of a peasant girl now, she was a serving woman in grim earnest."

[1] One often sees the names of Hungarian celebrities with prefixed "de's" or "von's" in English newspapers. This is quite inaccurate, the Magyar language admitting no such honorific particles.

[2] Rózsa's doings are recorded in Jókai's "Lélekidomar." An English translation of the book was rejected by an eminent Scotch publisher a few years ago as too improbable, yet the events there recorded are literally true.

After the catastrophe of Világos, when the unconquerable Görgei voluntarily surrendered the last fragments of his exhausted army to the Russians so as to baulk the Austrians of a triumph they did not deserve, Jókai was saved from captivity by the ingenious audacity of János Rákóczy, Kossuth's secretary, who hired a carriage and horses, disguised himself as a coachman, and, with the utmost nonchalance, drove right through the advancing Muscovites. Picking up his wife again at Gyula, Jókai set off for the remote little hamlet of Tardoná, a place "walled off from the rest of the world" by dense beech forests, where hundreds of thousands of pigs were every year fattened for the Servian market. Here Jókai lived at the house of his friend, the local magistrate, Béni Csányi, for nearly six months, principally occupied in landscape painting, while his indefatigable wife hastened back to Pest to resume her engagement at the National Theatre (they had for the time no other means of subsistence), and attempt to save him from proscription. From August to the middle of October Jókai knew absolutely nothing of what was going on in the world. Tardoná was a corner of the earth whither no visitor ever came, and where the inhabitants themselves went nowhither. At last his wife rejoined him, and told him that his hermit-like seclusion would soon be over. She then took from her bosom a carefully concealed tiny grey schedule, which was a great treasure in those days. It was the guarantee of his liberation—a common passport. It should be explained that when the fortress of Comorn capitulated,

months after the war was over everywhere else, it was on condition that every officer of the garrison should be provided with a passport guaranteeing his life and liberty, and dispensing him from enrolment in the Austrian army. Jókai's wife had contrived to procure for him such a passport in the simplest way in the world. A friend of hers, Vincent Szathmary, wrote Jókai's name down on the list of the capitulating officers as a third lieutenant, and handed the passport bearing his name to his wife. This had been Madame Jókai's idea from the first, and was the reason why Jókai had been hidden away so carefully by her among the beech forests of Tardoná till she had safely carried out her innocent conspiracy.

Jókai's life was now safe, but extreme caution was still by no means superfluous. It was not till some time later that he ventured to return to Pest from Miskólcz under the pseudonym of János Kovács,[3] living most of the time at his wife's lodgings, or at an inn among the hills of Buda. The military government (Hungary was then under martial law, with Czechs in all the chief posts of trust) was inclined to be indulgent to literature, but spies and traitors were about, and to his eternal shame a Magyar lawyer, Hegyesi by name, hoping to curry favour with the authorities at Vienna, informed against Jókai and thirty-four other Hungarian writers, whom he pronounced worthy of death. They were defended in a long memorial by their countryman, the advocate, János Kossalko, who demonstrated that the Hungarian literature was not the cause of the Hungarian revolution, but was only the echo of public opinion. Not till 1850 was it possible for Jókai to follow a literary career once

more. His first works were written under the name of his dog "Sajo;" but in 1851 he contributed under his own name to the columns of the *Magyar Emlék Lapok* and the *Remény*, two of the new reviews, as well as to the *Délibáb*, founded by Count Leo Festetics. It was now that Mrs. Jókai suggested the starting of a popular illustrated weekly, to be called *Vasárnapi Ujság*. But the difficulty was how to find an editor for this new venture. Jókai's name was in such bad odour with the Austrian Government that he himself was out of the question, but at last a suitable editor was found in Albert Pakh, a popular humorist of great merit, who had only been prevented from participating in the revolution by a lingering illness, which had confined him to the hospital during the whole of 1848-9, so that he escaped being amongst the proscribed. But if Pakh was the editor, Jókai was the soul of the *Vasárnapi Ujság*, and it was his pen which quickly gave it vogue and celebrity. In particular the extremely humorous dramatic criticisms, which he contributed to the paper every week in the form of letters under the pseudonym "Kakas Márton,"[4] were the chief delight of the reading public. Kakas Márton's *obiter dicta* were everywhere quoted. Kakas Márton meerschaums and Kakas Márton clays, with bowls in the shape of cock-headed men, were on sale at every shop in the capital. "*O tempi passati*," cries Jókai, reviewing that period nearly forty years afterwards, "what a popular character I was, to be sure! I really *was* in the mouth of the nation in those days."

[3] John Smith.

[4] Martin Cock.

In 1856 Jókai broke entirely new ground by starting the first Hungarian illustrated comic paper, under the title of *Nagy Tükör* (Great Mirror), but better known by its later title of *Üstökös* (The Comet), which he edited for the next fourteen years. Inestimable were the services which *Üstökös* rendered to Hungary. It taught the nation to laugh and live in hope of better times. It was also the training school of the first Magyar caricaturists and comic artists. Jókai himself contributed to it with his pencil as well as his pen, and some of the best comic cuts in the *Üstökös* were by "Kakas Márton." In course of time all the comic talent of the nation was attracted to the *Üstökös*, and a whole army of notable humorists supported its editor. It was in the columns of the *Üstökös* that Arany's famous satire, "Poloska," first appeared; it was the *Üstökös* which discovered and educated János Jánko, the prince of Magyar caricaturists; it was the *Üstökös* which refused to take the gendarmes or the censorship too seriously, and scourged with its satiric lash the blunders and absurdities of the Bach *régime*, which laboured so hard to germanize Hungary.

The *Üstökös* had a literary supplement to which Jókai contributed numerous novels. It was here that appeared his masterly little tale "A debreceni lunatikus" and the great romance "Rab Raby," in which the utter impossibility of reforming a high-spirited nation against its will is so dramatically demonstrated. This story is also remarkable for the best existing characterization of Kaiser Joseph II.